

Abstract 270**TITLE:** NJIDEKA: An HIV Intervention Program for African-American Women**AUTHORS:** Sandra Cook, Donna Stamps-Griffin, Sundra Link

ISSUE: African-American women account for a profoundly disproportionate percentage of all diagnosed AIDS cases among women. Moreover, the rate of infection continues to increase among women, especially African-American women. This suggests the need for effective gender specific, culturally relevant prevention strategies. The NJIDEKA (Swahili for "Survival is Paramount") Program addresses this need.

SETTING: NJIDEKA is specifically designed for African-American women at high risk for acquiring HIV. The nine NJIDEKA program sites are located in the Detroit metropolitan area. They include substance abuse treatment facilities, correctional institutions, and youth programs for females.

PROJECT: NJIDEKA, a theoretically based intervention program, consists of a ten week series of HIV empowerment workshops designed to eliminate barriers to HIV risk reduction for African-American women 1) Promoting by: a sense of self, dignity, pride, and community; 2) imparting skills that will empower women not only to effectively deal with intra and interpersonal relationships but also to better confront/negotiate the social context; and 3) producing group participants who will be a source of social support required to initiate and sustain risk reduction. Women successfully completing the program receive certificates and books of daily meditations or journals. In addition, onsite HIV counseling and testing is offered to program participants.

RESULTS: NJIDEKA has had a profound impact on the lives of its participants. Evaluation results indicate that NJIDEKA workshop participants have demonstrated significant increases in knowledge about HIV and STDs, a more realistic shift in their perceived vulnerability to acquire HIV, an increase in self reported condom use, and shifts in their levels of readiness to change risk behaviors. A further indication of the program's efficacy is its recognition by the CDC as one of nine Reputationally Strong Programs in the nation.

LESSONS LEARNED: NJIDEKA's experience suggests: 1) Taking the program to where high risk women are enhances accessibility and effectiveness. 2) African-American women favorably respond to a client-centered intervention with a workshop format, 3) Developing a true sense of self is empowering, 4) Providing incentives are an important part of the program's success, and 5) It is important to educate the staff at the workshop sites about HIV and related issues.

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